

# Courier

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## Picture this...!

Even though there may be lots of winter left, it's not too early to spring into action and get ready for the *Courier* Photo Contest. The deadline for all entries is Friday, April 21.

Marking its 25th anniversary, the *Courier* Photo Contest is a popular way to show your creative side. Anyone can take a picture, any county employee can enter and winning is as rewarding as any other accomplishment

you earn. So look for that roll of film you never had developed or download your digital images on your computer - then give us your best shot!

You may be a high-tech enthusiast or a point-and-shoot camera bug; a digital shooter or a film lover - no matter, your entries are welcome.

All pictures are judged by professional photographers on photographic and

artistic quality. The contest rules and categories are on page 2 - but remember, the deadline is April 21. ■



2005 Best of Show winner by Valery Bey.

## Toward better communications

Communications is often a main ingredient in success or failure. History is full of examples that show disastrous results if we fail to understand each other. Good communications is the responsibility of everyone, from the person sending the communication to the one receiving it.

Here in Fairfax County government, we enjoy many tools that enhance our ability to communicate well, from top-notch training programs that enhance our skills to standardized processes which reduce misunderstanding. The assessment of both

internal and external communications is a continuous process. Even when there are more than two people exchanging ideas, the opportunity for misunderstanding occurs.

The Employee Communication Board is a county organization designed to report on the state of county government internal communications. With representatives from various county agencies, the board meets monthly to assess internal communications and recommend ways

*See Communications, page 3*

# Courier Photo Contest Rules

You gotta have rules...and here are 13 of them that will help you make a successful submission to the *Courier* Photo Contest.

1. The contest is open to all county, school and retired employees. Each photo entry must have been photographed by the submitter and not entered in this contest previously. There is a limit of five photos per submitter.

2. Categories and examples of content, either color or black & white, are:

- a. **Snapshots** – where amateur photographers shine. These pictures are defined by their snapshot size and their spontaneity.
- b. **County-related** – county or school facilities, activities or employees at work.
- c. **Nature** – outdoor beauty, such as outdoor scenes, sunsets, seascapes, skylines, farms.
- d. **Structures** – monuments, bridges, architecture, building details, design elements.
- e. **Floral** – unique and beautiful flowers, leaves, trees.
- f. **People** – families, couples, workmen, sportsmen, riders, drivers, etc. Important: be sure you have a signed model release for any recognizable people in these photos. The release form is available at <http://infoweb/opa/fcgc/modelrelease.doc>.
- g. **Animals** – pets, wildlife, zoo life, farm or domesticated animals, and even insects and butterflies.
- h. **Quirky** – anything unusual, humorous, eclectic or abstract.

3. All photos except those entered as snapshots should be at least 5x7 and no larger than 9x12 (excluding the mat). Digital images must be submitted as photo-quality prints and entered in any category in which they apply.

4. All photos must be mounted on supportive material or matted.

5. Photos must not be framed. Framed photos will be eliminated and returned to sender.

6. Each photo must be entered in a specific category. Judges reserve the right to move photos between categories if appropriate. Multiple prizes may be awarded in each category.

7. A signed entry blank, which will be printed in the next *Courier*, must be filled out and attached to the back of each entry.

8. Work adjudged to be pornographic, obscene as defined by Virginia law, libelous or containing vulgar language will not be accepted.

9. All winning entries may be exhibited at the Fairfax County Government Center and published in a special edition of the *Courier* scheduled for May 26.

10. Neither the *Courier* nor the county assumes any liability for lost, stolen or damaged works and provides no insurance coverage for work on display.

11. Judges will be photography specialists not affiliated with Fairfax County and their decision will be final.

12. Best in Show, first-, second-, third-place and honorable mention ribbons with certificates will be awarded in a ceremony in the Government Center on May 26.

13. Entries must be received no later than close of business Friday, April 21, and may be submitted:

- a. via interoffice mail to *Courier* Photo Contest, Office of Public Affairs, GC 551
- b. by bringing entries to Government Center Suite 551, Office of Public Affairs
- c. by mailing to:

*Courier* Photo Contest  
Office of Public Affairs  
12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 551  
Fairfax, VA 22035-0065



One In A Bunch  
by Vivek Lopez  
Office for Children



*Communications, from page 1*  
for improvement.

"Communications has greatly improved within the county during the past few years," said County Executive **Tony Griffin**, pointing out that the recently adopted Communication Strategy is an excellent example of progress. "I depend on the Communication Board as one of the ways I have to determine the effectiveness of county government. If something is working well, I want it to be known. And I want to know if there are areas where we can improve our communications. In today's world where information flows with lightning speed, it is imperative that we are all connected and speaking with consistency and understanding."

The Employee Communication Board, chaired by Office of Public Affairs Director **Merni Fitzgerald**, meets monthly to discuss "multidirectional, timely and accurate communications in the workplace." The board brings together employee members with ideas, experience and perspectives from various agencies which underscores its value. "The Communication Board has undertaken several in-depth reviews of communications policies and practices, and has made some significant recommendations which the senior leadership has taken under advisement," said Fitzgerald.

Accomplishments of the board include:

- ♦ Providing a report to the senior leadership team on Internal Communications: Best Practices and Recommendations.
- ♦ Redesigning the First Friday program with the county executive and deputies.
- ♦ Addressing department-wide communications issues such as travel, fraud and employee computer access.
- ♦ Establishing a new live electronic program, Connect with the County Exec, on the Fairfax County Training Network.
- ♦ Recommending expanding the county executive's direct communications with staff.

Fitzgerald also pointed out that there still are some challenges in making the county's internal communications programs the best they can be. "The digital divide where not all employees have access to the rapid electronic

notification process and the rapid changes in technology which affect us in our work often present obstacles rather than solutions to the goal of improving internal communications," she said.

Fitzgerald identified one of the most successful accomplishments where the Communication Board's contributions played a key role. "The countywide Communication Strategy is an important step in establishing a coordinated and consistent communications policy in the county," she said. (The Communication Strategy can be found on the Infoweb at <http://infoweb/cex/communicationstrategy.htm>.)

The Communication Board is preparing to launch another important initiative within the month to evaluate the most effective communications methods in county government. A survey will be distributed to randomly selected county employees asking for their opinions on topics relating to communications. "The board anticipates the results of this survey will further indicate communications methods in the county that are working well and those which can be improved," Fitzgerald said. ■

Communication Board members

- Merni Fitzgerald, OPA
- Addie Armstrong, DPWES
- Gina Ash, HR
- Belinda Buescher, DFS
- Sandra Caple, Fire & Rescue
- Angie Carrera, Language Access
- Kimberly Cordero, Health Dept.
- Curt Dierdorff, FCPA
- Paula Ferrer, Fire & Rescue
- Deirdre Finneran, Finance
- Sarah Goldman, EAC
- Gordon Jarratt, DIT
- Mary Ann Jennings, Police
- Jeremy Lasich, OPA
- Michael Liberman, Cable
- Cindy McAlister, Police
- John Nash, Courier editor
- Jan Prasher, Libraries
- Susan Schiffer, JDR Courts
- Patti Schlener, HCD
- Howard Springsteen, DVS
- Virginia Stanton, DPWES
- Martha Villanigro-Santiago, OEP



*Merni Fitzgerald, OPA, Diedre Finneran, Finance, and Kimberly Cordero, Health Department, discuss issues at the Communication Board.*



## Focus on Benefits

# Deferred compensation: Increased retirement contributions makes a difference!

Your 457 deferred compensation plan offers two powerful tools to accumulate money for retirement: contributions that are not currently taxed as income and tax-deferred earnings. By electing regular payroll deductions, saving is automatic.

What a difference \$20 can make! A small increase each year in your contribution amount can make a significant difference in

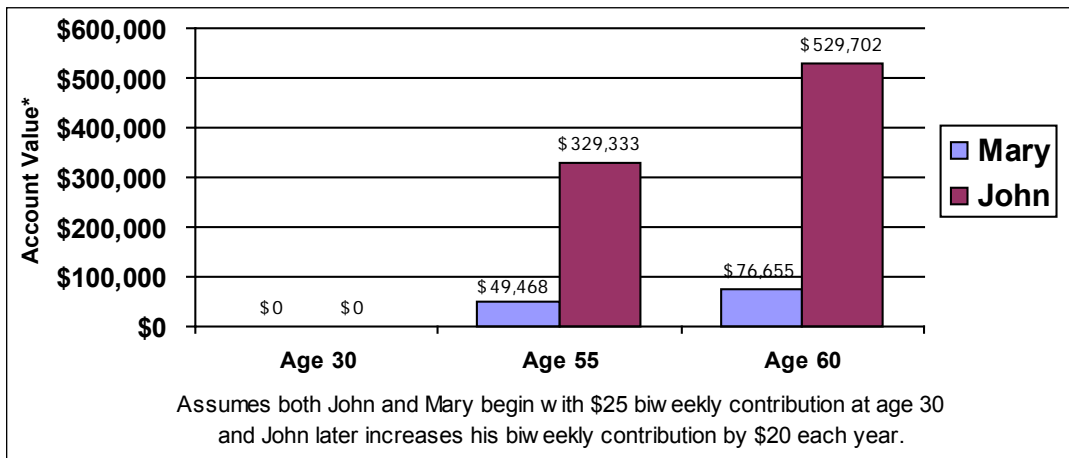
your deferred compensation account balance by the time you retire.

For example, John and Mary are both 30 years old. They decide to enroll in a 457 plan and contribute \$25 biweekly. John decides to increase his contributions by \$20 each year but Mary makes no change. By age 55, Mary has over \$49,000 in her account but John, at the same age, finds he has over \$329,000!

Five years later, John has over \$500,000 which is \$400,000 more than Mary has in her account.

As you can see from this example, even small increases in your deferred compensation contribution amount can provide significant returns over time. If you would like to enroll in the deferred compensation plan, increase your contribution amount

or discuss your investment strategy, visit or call the Financial Help Desk at 703-324-4995, TTY 711. ■



*\*Assumes 8 percent annual rate of return. Not an actual account – for illustrative purposes only. The performance of your account may be higher or lower and will vary according to investment options selected. Past performance is not indicative of future returns.*

## Enrolling newborn children/newly-eligible spouses in health coverage

Newborn children and newly eligible spouses are not automatically enrolled in health coverage. In order to enroll them in your health coverage, you must take the following steps within 60 days of the child's birth or the spouse's date of eligibility:

- ♦ Complete a Fairfax County Government Health, Dental and Flexible Spending Account Enrollment/Change Form, indicating that you are adding a new dependent.
- ♦ Send or bring the completed Form, along with a birth certificate or a copy of the proof-of-birth letter from the hospital, or marriage

certificate to the Employee Benefits Division, DHR, Suite 270 at the Government Center.

For newborns, coverage will be effective retroactive to the date of birth. For spouses, coverage will be effective the first day of the month following receipt of the properly completed form.

If you do not enroll the child or spouse within 60 days, you cannot enroll them until the next open enrollment period, unless you experience a qualifying event that permits earlier enrollment. ■

# Scanning for better service

Feb. 10 was a milestone in the Department of Human Resources. On that day, the staff scanned the last employee file into its document imaging system, completing a nearly two-year old project.

In late 1999, the Payroll Division in the Department of Human Resources moved from a paper filing system to a document imaging system for retaining County employee personnel files. Initially, only new documents submitted for inclusion in employee personnel files were scanned into the system. Existing paper employee personnel files were scanned into the system whenever employees left county employment or as time allowed.

By June 2004, the Payroll Division's Information Management Section committed to imaging the remaining paper employee personnel files. "While this has been a huge challenge for all of us, it will greatly improve the county's ability to serve our customers and has already attracted the interest of others faced with similar record retention and archival issues," said **Peter Schroth**, director of the Department of Human Resources.

More than 1.3 million pages were scanned during the course of the project. Not only have 35 filing cabinets been freed up, but employees are benefiting by having quick and easy access to their official personnel file using an automated system whenever they visit the Department

of Human Resources. Problems such as lost or misfiled documents that are often found in paper filing systems have been virtually eliminated. "Ensuring the confidentiality of employee records is a major objective of the payroll division, and this hasn't changed. Electronic records are every bit as secure as the paper files," said **Bobbie Deegan**, payroll manager for the Department of Human Resources. "Only persons with authorized access can retrieve records from the system."

Employees are welcome to review their files at any time during normal county business hours (8 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday) and can do so by visiting Suite 270 in the Government Center. For more information, please call the Payroll Division, Department of Human Resources at 703-324-3412, menu option 4, TTY 711. ■

*Peter Schroth and members of the Department of Human Resources Payroll Division with a "few boxes" of their work.*



## A. Heath Onthank Award Nominations

Tuesday, Feb. 28, is the deadline for nominations for the 2005 A. Heath Onthank Memorial Award, recognizing accomplishments of outstanding worth in advancing and improving public service in the county government during 2005. Recipients will be recognized at a Board of Supervisors meeting in June, receive a plaque and a \$2,000 award. The award is open to merit employees of Fairfax County government and to unified scale and food service employees of the Fairfax County Public Schools. Nominees must have completed their initial probationary period. Nominations may be made by fellow employees or residents. Nomination forms are available from members of the Board of Supervisors, department heads and the Department of Human Resources. For more information, please contact **Robert Fitzpatrick** at 703-324 3306, TTY 703-222-7314. ■

## Employee Focus

# Catch her if you can...

It's not the Gingerbread Man you'd be trying to catch up with but **Nan Butler Roberts**



Nan Butler Roberts

**Roberts**, a member of the county's Office of Equity Programs. Her busy work-days carry over into an equally active personal life.

Nan was born and raised in Rappahanock County, Virginia, and continues to live there with her husband in Sperryville. To make a rather long commute tolerable, she is a member of a van pool. "Our van pool is all women and we have a great time during our commutes," she laughed, pointing out the collective van pool has opinions, solutions and advice on just about every subject.

Nan graduated from James Madison University with a degree in communications. As she was completing a masters degree from George Washington University, she

saw an advertisement for a position with Fairfax County in the old Public Works & Environmental Management Department working with training development, her specialization. "My plan was to work for a few years for the county and move on, but I've stayed for 20

years," she said, citing many good features of working for "the best county in Virginia."

Nan has been with the Office for Equity Programs for six years, developing and conducting training programs in diversity awareness, disability awareness, sexual harassment prevention as well as other activities and events. "In addition to believing strongly in the issues I work with, I've had the opportunity to broaden into other areas, such as budgeting, special event management and serving as the office representative in meetings and programs. The variety is wonderful," she said.

So what does Nan do in her free time? "I guess my hobby is working," she laughed. She has helped establish several scholarship funds, one in honor of her mother and father, the Howard and Dorothy Butler Fund, who strongly believed in the value of a good education. She is an officer in a new and fast-growing scholarship program, There's Hope, that benefits anyone – young people and adults – who want to further their education. "This fund has raised more than \$100,000 and support is growing rapidly," she said.

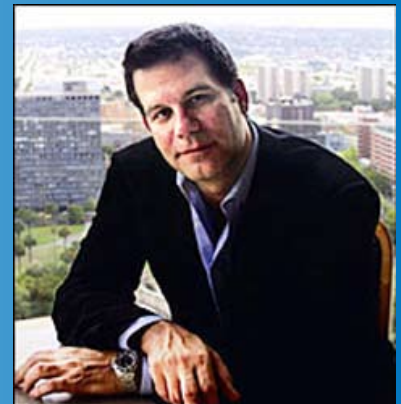
In addition to all her fund-raising activities, Nan is very involved with her church where she serves as a deacon and enjoys speaking, working with women's auxiliaries, youth programs and community outreach. "We all have the power to make life better for others. In return, that makes our lives better," she smiled.

So, catch her if you can. Nan is on the move! ■

## Millennium Forum

"The Rise of the Creative Class" is the topic of the next Millennium Forum on Wednesday, March 1, from 10:30 a.m. to noon in the Government Center Board Auditorium. Dr. **Richard Florida**, Hirst Professor in the School of Public Policy at George Mason University, will discuss how jurisdictions mistakenly try to lure workers to an area by first getting large employers to relocate there. His research shows that if a jurisdiction becomes known as a hip, creative cultural center, talented people will move there, which will then attract employers. The Harvard Business Review called it one of the top breakthrough ideas of 2004.

This event is free and open to all county employees. It's part of the employee development series operated under the auspices of the county executive. For more information, go to <http://infoweb/mfs/forums/20060301/default.htm>. ■





## Briefs

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## Meals on Wheels needs your help

The Fairfax Area Agency on Aging's Meals on Wheels (MOW) program needs your help now.

The Fairfax group needs a volunteer to serve as treasurer. This position is responsible for the finances of the MOW group including a monthly report to the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging.

The Eastern Fairfax MOW group needs volunteers for two leadership positions: treasurer and assistant treasurer. These positions are responsible for the finances of the MOW group and a monthly report to the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging. It would be helpful if the prospective candidates lived in the eastern part of the county in Annandale, Falls Church, McLean, Great Falls or the Tysons area.

Volunteers also are needed to deliver meals to clients in Annandale, Baileys Crossroads, Centreville/

Chantilly, Fairfax, Tysons, Reston/Herndon, Vienna, Falls Church and Little River Glen. Vietnamese-speaking volunteers also are needed. Just pick up meals at specified sites between 10:30 a.m. and noon and deliver them to the clients, usually by 1 p.m. Drivers can choose to deliver meals weekly, biweekly, monthly or to substitute as needed.

For more information on MOW volunteer leadership positions or meal delivery, please call the Fairfax AAA Volunteer Intake Line at 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or e-mail [melanie.mitchell@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:melanie.mitchell@fairfaxcounty.gov).

## Animal Shelter Adoption on Sunday

An earlier Courier explained the program to relocate homeless animals from the Gulf Coast areas to Northern Virginia. Now you can see these and other animals in the shelter during the special President's Day Weekend Adoption. Plan to

stop by the Fairfax County Animal Shelter, 4500 West Ox Road on Sunday, Feb. 19, from noon to 4 p.m. and see the great animals that are looking for a nice home. In addition to dogs and cats, there are rabbits, ferrets and guinea pigs. Come celebrate Presidents' Day with a new furry friend. For more information, contact the shelter at 703-830-1100, TTY 711.

## Volunteering helps

Volunteering is rewarding to both you as the volunteer and those benefitting from your service. Volunteers can help those in need by grocery shopping, providing transportation, doing light housework or seasonal yardwork, writing letters, organizing household tasks, placing telephone calls or just visiting. Call **Trina Mayhan-Webb** at 703-324-5184, TTY 711, for specific ways you can help your community come alive through volunteer efforts. ■

# County receives EPA award

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently selected Fairfax County for the 2005 Landfill Methane Outreach Program Community Partner of the Year award. The I-95 landfill received the honor at a presentation in Baltimore on Jan. 18 for its program that uses methane gas to heat the facility's vehicle maintenance shop.

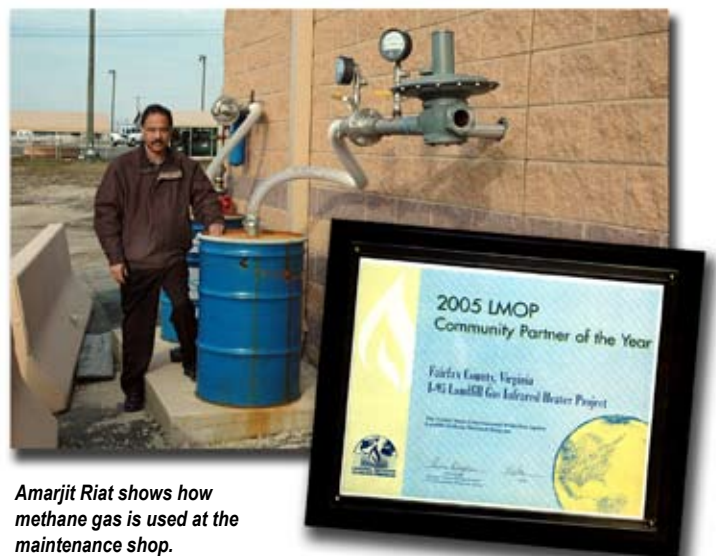
**Amarjit Riat**, manager of the huge I-95 landfill in Lorton, explained how methane gas is retrieved from the closed landfill there, cleaned and piped to the vehicle maintenance building. "It used to cost the county about \$6,000 annually to heat only half of the maintenance building. Now, we can heat the whole building with energy that is virtually free," he said, point-

ing out that in addition to saving money, the shop workers are happy to be warm.

Methane gas from the I-95 landfill, a by-product of decomposing trash, also is used at the Noman M. Cole Pollution Control Plant to burn sludge. Landfill gases generate six megawatts of electricity, enough to power 6,000 homes.

"The most important thing here is that we're using greenhouse gases which are hazardous to the environment

and at the same time saving the county money," said Riat. He promises more projects in the future that will tap this source of free energy for county use. ■



Amarjit Riat shows how methane gas is used at the maintenance shop.

# Excel - Calculator and Format Painter

Have you ever been in need of a calculator to test some numbers in Excel or needed to create consistent formats for different cells. You can easily add a calculator to the tool bar in Excel, which allows you to test values. Using the Format Painter icon allows you to duplicate your format from one cell to another.

## Adding a calculator to Excel:

1. On the Toolbar click View select Toolbars, and then click Customize.
2. Select the Commands tab.
3. In the Categories list, click Tools, and then in the Commands list, click Custom (the one with the gray calculator graphic).
4. Left click and drag the selected command from the Commands list to a toolbar. (Lift your finger from the mouse when you see a plus sign next to your pointer.)
5. On the Customize window, click Close.
6. Now click the new button to run the calculator.

## Using the Format Painter icon

The Format Painter icon appears as a paint brush on the Standard Toolbar. This icon is available in most of the MS Office applications. Using the format painter will make formatting easier and consistent. If you have a spreadsheet or document which has headings, titles or some special text and you want repeat that format to other text, Format Painter can be used to duplicate text color, size, alignment, and attributes such as bold and italics.

1. Highlight (select) the heading or text you wish to duplicate.
2. With the formatted text selected, click on the Format Painter

## Tech Tip # 102

Department of Information Technology  
Technology Infrastructure Division  
Technical Support Center  
Fairfax County Government Center  
12000 Government Center parkway  
Fairfax, VA 22035  
Tel: 703-222-3535, option 1  
Fax: 703-222-3396  
TTY: 711

button.

3. Select the heading or text you wish to match the format. The previously selected format will be applied to the selected text.

Note: If you have multiple text items requiring the selected format, double-click the Format Painter button. The format will be applied to each text phrase you highlight until the Format Painter button is deselected. ■

# Fairfax County honors the memory of former board chairman Jack Herrity



Flags were lowered to half staff in Fairfax County on Feb. 3 and 4 in memory of former Board of Supervisors Chairman Jack Herrity. Herrity, who was 74 years old, died Feb. 1.

Herrity served as board chairman from 1975 to 1987, and often has been credited with much of the development in the county. He also championed major transportation initiatives such as the Dulles toll road, Fairfax County parkway and widening of I-66. The parkway, as well as the Herrity Building in the Government Center complex, were named in honor of his years of service and devotion to Fairfax County. ■

Learn how to use the county seal at <http://infoweb/cex/commstrategy>.



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